



REHABILITATION FOR EMERGENCY OPERATIONS AND TRAINING

The importance and benefits of a robust rehabilitation process for firefighters during emergency operations and training exercises are well known. Dehydration and electrolyte imbalances due to overexertion are just two of the many risks first responders face. To protect personnel, departments must follow a systematic and organized approach to rehabilitation during and post-incident.

Importance of Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation should be an integral part of both incident scene management and an occupational safety and health program. To assist with developing or implementing protocols for post-incident rehabilitation, fire departments can turn to NFPA 1584, *Standard on the Rehabilitation Process for Members During Emergency Operations and Training Exercises*. Each fire-service-related NFPA code and standard is developed with input from the public and a technical committee that

includes experts in the field and fire sciences. As fire departments develop standard operating procedures (SOPs), they can look to NFPA for that consensus-based guidance to help keep firefighters safe and resilient.

Understanding Critical Roles and Responsibilities

Every first responder has a role both during an emergency incident and post-incident as detailed in the table below.

Role	Responsibilities
Incident Commander	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and provide adequate resources for rest and rehabilitation of all members of the incident team.• Ensure that mental health facilities are available to all members of the department.
Company Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain an awareness of the physical and mental conditions of each member.• Ensure members remain hydrated and that potable fluids are available.• Continuously assess crew at least every 45 minutes and more frequently when working in extreme conditions.
Rehabilitation Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designate a responder rehabilitation location(s).• Request necessary medical personnel to evaluate medical condition of personnel.• Request necessary feeding and other resources for rehabilitation of personnel.• Release individuals needing additional medical care to EMS.• Maintain accountability of all personnel in the rehabilitation location.• Maintain appropriate records and documentation.
Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participate in rehabilitation activities when assigned.• Maintain hydration.• Advise company officers when level of fatigue or exposure to heat or cold is approaching a level that could negatively affect them, their crew, or the operation.• Remain aware of the health and safety of other members of their crew.



REHABILITATION FOR EMERGENCY OPERATIONS AND TRAINING *continued*

Tools Available in NFPA 1584

Key Terminology

Using the same terminology can help ensure that all the members of a fire department understand key information. Some key terms include the following:

- **Rehabilitation:** An intervention designed to mitigate against the physical (body), physiological, and emotional (mind) stress of firefighting to sustain a member's energy, improve performance, and decrease the likelihood of on-scene injury or death.
- **Recovery:** The process of returning a member's physiological and psychological (mind) states to levels that indicate the person is able to perform additional emergency tasks, be reassigned, or released without any adverse effects.
- **Active Cooling:** The process of using external methods or devices (e.g., hand and forearm immersion, misting fans, ice vests) to reduce elevated core body temperature.
- **Passive Cooling:** The process of using natural evaporative cooling (e.g., sweating, doffing personal protective equipment, moving to a cool environment) to reduce elevated core body temperature.

Standard Documentation

Using standard documentation can help ensure crew members do not miss key information during or after an incident. It can also help set base levels for tracking key information. NFPA 1584 provides detailed sample rehabilitation procedures as well as information on the classifications, signs, symptoms, and treatment of heat stress and cold stress. Fire departments can look to NFPA 1584 to help build effective SOPs and for guidance on creating a rehabilitation documentation report, which might include information as shown below.

Sample Rehabilitation Report to Document:

- ✓ Unit number
- ✓ Member name
- ✓ Time-in/time-out for members entering or leaving the rehab area
- ✓ If the member is referred for medical evaluation
- ✓ Rehab disposition

Sample Rehabilitation Efforts to Include:

- ✓ Relief from extreme climate and/or incident conditions
- ✓ Rest and recovery
- ✓ Rehydration
- ✓ Replacement of calories and electrolytes
- ✓ Active and/or passive cooling as needed for incident type and climatic conditions
- ✓ Medical assessment and monitoring
- ✓ Member accountability
- ✓ Process for member release from rehabilitation

Detailed Guidelines

NFPA 1584 also includes specific guidelines for which vital signs should be recorded at an incident and when EMS needs to be alerted, as shown below.

Vital Signs to be Obtained:

- Temperature
- Respiratory rate
- Pulse oximetry
- Heart rate
- Blood pressure

When to Alert EMS:

- Personnel complaining of chest pain, dizziness, shortness of breath, weakness, nausea, or headache
- General complaints (cramps, aches, or pains)
- Symptoms of heat- or cold-related stress
- Changes in gait, speech, or behavior
- Alertness and orientation (person, place, or time)

Take Action and Learn More

- ▶ Get involved in the process to help develop future editions of NFPA 1584.
- ▶ Get free digital access to the standard at nfpa.org/1584.



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